



**BRIEFING: JUNE 3, 2014 BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEM #8**

**TO:** Chairman Richard and Board Members

**FROM:** Michelle Boehm, Southern California Regional Director

**DATE:** June 3, 2014

**RE:** Update on the Supplemental Alternatives Analysis Report for the Palmdale to Los Angeles Project Section

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**Background**

The purpose of this agenda item is to update the Board on work accomplished since October 2013 on the Palmdale to Los Angeles Section. Consistent with the briefing provided in 2013, proposed alternatives have been refined and documented in a Supplemental Alternatives Analysis and are presented here to inform the Board that these alternatives are moving forward for study in the environmental documentation and permitting processes.

**Discussion**

In 2007, the environmental review process for the Palmdale to Los Angeles Section formally commenced with public notices. In July 2010, a Preliminary Alternatives Analysis (PAA) Report was issued by the California High-Speed Rail Authority defining an initial set of alternatives for the Palmdale to Los Angeles Section. Subsequent Supplemental Alternative Analysis (SAA) Reports were issued by the Authority for the Section in March 2011 and April 2012. The March 2011 SAA Report re-evaluated the alignment from Los Angeles Union Station (LAUS) to Sylmar, and the April 2012 SAA Report focused solely on the alignment from Sylmar to Palmdale.

Since the release of these SAA's, the Authority released the 2012 and subsequent 2014 Business Plans, with a renewed focus on stakeholder engagement and the introduction of the Initial Operating Section (IOS) concept, among other elements. Also, there have been significant strides made in regional transportation planning that would interface with high-speed rail in Southern California to create connected transportation hubs. Considering these developments, the Palmdale to Los Angeles team carefully reviewed the 2012 SAA alternatives to ensure consistency with the Business Plan, and regional transportation-hub planning, as well as the opportunity to address specific stakeholder feedback and concerns. One particular area evaluated during these activities was the location of the stations in light of regional planning efforts. This deeper evaluation provided additional opportunity to review the alignments that connect the stations.

On October 14, 2013, staff gave an informational update to the Board regarding the Palmdale to Los Angeles Section and possible refinement areas. Since then, additional work has been done to further refine the alternatives and solicit feedback from stakeholders.

Consistent with our overall objectives and discussed in the previous October 2013 board report, the following areas were evaluated:

- In Palmdale, the Palmdale Station location was evaluated in light of the Business Plan purpose and need, as well as the potential connection to an interstate high-speed train system planned to operate between Victorville and Las Vegas.
- In the Santa Clarita area, alternatives that address stakeholder concerns as well as design constraints were evaluated that would minimize impacts to schools, natural resources, and existing and planned development.
- Design flexibility was evaluated in the San Fernando Valley along the existing rail corridor. Continuing to study an alignment to the west of Metrolink along this corridor allows for flexibility in implementing early investment projects described as bookends in SB 1029 and presented as a goal of the 2014 Business Plan.
- In the San Fernando Valley, the team reevaluated the potential station locations for connectivity, land use, ridership potential, consistency with regional plans and objectives, and the IOS concept introduced in the 2012 Business Plan and reinforced in the 2014 Business Plan, including in light of advanced development of Burbank Airport as a regional intermodal transportation hub.
- At Los Angeles Union Station, staff has worked with the Union Station Master Plan team to evaluate options under consideration as part of a holistic re-imagining of the historic Union Station site. The issues at the constrained site are complex, and staff continues to collaborate with the Metro team to identify concepts that will accommodate the arrival of HSR to Union Station.

Efforts to further evaluate the location of the stations as discussed in the October Board meeting have led local stakeholders to bring forward additional alignment ideas not previously reviewed for this Section. One such idea was surfaced by Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich who requested at the October Board meeting, and again in comments on the 2014 Business Plan, that the Authority consider evaluating a more direct route between Palmdale and the San Fernando Valley that might avoid conflicts with the populated areas along the SR 14 corridor. Authority staff is evaluating that request, and plans to return to the Board soon with an update.

Over the last several weeks and concluding on June 5, the Authority has hosted five community meetings, in Los Angeles, Burbank, Palmdale, San Fernando, and Santa Clarita to share findings and gather additional public and stakeholder input regarding the subject matters covered in this SAA.

In addition to the alignment refinements, the team evaluated whether the Palmdale to Los Angeles section can be better advanced as two high-speed rail project sections for environmental review, engineering and implementation: Palmdale to San Fernando Valley (Burbank) and San

Fernando Valley (Burbank) to Los Angeles. The current IOS concept calls for initial high-speed operations between Merced and the San Fernando Valley. High-speed rail from the San Fernando Valley to LAUS will follow as a separate step. Accordingly, the team concluded that dividing the Palmdale to Los Angeles section into two sections will reduce potential delay to the IOS because of the inherent complexities and associated timeline involved in LAUS master planning. This approach for dividing the sections should increase the probability of timely delivery of the IOS, while providing the time to ensure the best possible outcome at LAUS.

Based on the refinements and evaluations mentioned above, staff intends to carry forward the following alternatives for the Palmdale to Los Angeles project section into the environmental documentation and permitting processes:

- A single station location at the northern end of the Section: The Palmdale East Station located at the Palmdale Transportation Center
- Two alignment alternatives through the Acton/Agua Dulce Area: SR 14 East (SR 14 E) and SR 14 Hybrid (SR 14 H)
- Two alignments through Santa Clarita: the revised Santa Clarita North (SCN) and the Santa Clarita South (SCS)
- Alignments in the San Fernando Valley that are east and west of Metrolink
- A single station location in the San Fernando Valley: The Burbank Airport Station
- Three approaches to Los Angeles Union Station: the LAPT 1 and LAPT 3 Tunnel Alternatives and a Surface Alternative
- Formally divide the Palmdale to Los Angeles section into the Palmdale to San Fernando Valley (Burbank Airport) section and the San Fernando Valley (Burbank Airport) to Los Angeles section for planning, engineering and environmental review.

### **Next Steps**

- Staff will continue planning and environmental evaluations pursuant to the above.
- Evaluate possible direct alignments consistent with recent stakeholder feedback from Supervisor Antonovich, and others, and return to the Board with an update.

### **Attachments**

– *Draft Supplemental Alternatives Analysis Report: Palmdale to Los Angeles* (May 2014)